Under the Transport Subsidy Scheme and the Capital Investment Subsidy Scheme, a sum of Rs. 311 lakhs and Rs. 126 lakhs respectively has been released in the Tenth Five Year Plan for disbursal against pending claims, the last release being in January, 2007. The processing of claims and release of funds is a continuous process.

Prefrential trade agreement between India and Israel

1056. SHRIMATI N.P. DURGA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether the study group of India and Israel recommended for a Preferential Trade Agreement between India and Israel;

(b) if so, whether negotiations on this was held with the recently visited Deputy Prime Minister of Israel;

(c) if so, the areas of discussion;

(d) whether the issue of issuing long-term Visas to diamond traders of India has been raised; and

(e) if so, Israel's response thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) Bilateral talks were held between Hon'ble Commerce and Industry Minister and the Hon'ble Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Industry, Trade and Labour of the State of Israel, during the latter's visit to India from December 2-8, 2006. The two Ministers reviewed the progress in implementation of the recommendations of the Joint Study Group set up by the two countries in December, 2004. They agreed to deepen the economic engagement between the two countries, and welcomed the establishment of an Indian bank in Israel and the continuing growth in the overall trade.

(d) Yes, Sir.

(e) The Government of Israel has since informed that one-year business visa (category B-1) would be issued to the diamond business persons of Indian origin.

Shortage of cement

1057. DR. V. MAITREYAN: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that there is a huge deficit of cement requirement in the country;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) what is the total production and consumption of cement both in private and public sectors in the country;